

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 AGRE-00 (ISO) W

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R 010222Z AUG 77

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5970

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 8933

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, MOPS, PINT, CB, LA, UR, VM

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON CURRENT VIETNAMESE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CONCERNS

SUMMARY: A WESTERN OFFICIAL RESIDENT IN HANOI MET WITH CONGENOFF AND DISCUSSED HIS IMPRESSIONS OF PRESENT DAY VIETNAM. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST WAS HIS VIEW THAT VIETNAMESE PRAGMATISTS ARE UNDER ATTACK FROM SRV HARDLINERS BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF RESULTS IN THE U.S.-SRV TALKS IN PARIS. OTHER POINTS COVERED WERE REPORTS OF VIETNAMESE/CAMBODIAN BORDER CLASHES, APPARENT INCREASED FRICTION BETWEEN THE SOVIETS AND VIETNAMESE, AND A CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM BEING HELD ON POLICIES FOR THE SOUTH. END SUMMARY.

1. U.S.-SRV NEGOTIATIONS

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VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE SECOND PARIS MEETING, APPEARED GENUINELY SURPRISED AND DISAPPOINTED THAT THEY HAD NOT OBTAINED U.S. AGREEMENT FOR PROVIDING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THE VIETNAMESE, IN GENERAL, SEEM TO HAVE DIFFICULTY GRASPING THE CURRENT POLITICAL REALITIES IN THE U.S., AND ESPECIALLY THE CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION TO ECONOMIC AID FOR THE

SRV. ACCORDING TO COMMENTS FROM MID-LEVEL SRV OFFICIALS AND FROM THE "HUMANITE" CORRESPONDENT IN HANOI, VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS FAVORING NEGOTIATIONS AND NORMALIZATION WITH THE U.S. ARE NOW UNDER HEAVY ATTACK FROM HARDLINERS BECAUSE OF THE FEW TANGIBLE RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PARIS TALKS.

2. VIETNAMESE/CAMBODIAN BORDER CLASHES

ARMED CLASHES BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIANS ON THE SOUTHERN BORDER WERE REPORTED IN APRIL-MAY AND THEN AGAIN IN JUNE. ONE SOURCE OF THESE REPORTS WAS EAST GERMAN TECHNICIANS WHO WERE WORKING IN THIS AREA. (NO INFORMATION WAS KNOWN ABOUT THE GDR PROJECT.) DESPITE THESE PROBLEMS, CAMBODIAN DIPLOMATS STILL APPEARED REGULARLY AT HANOI FUNCTIONS AND NEITHER CAMBODIAN NOR VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS PUBLICLY ADMIT TO ANY DIFFICULTIES. THE ONLY SIGN OF A RIFT IS THE PRESENCE IN HANOI OF THE SRV AMBASSADOR TO PHNOM PENH WHO WAS REPORTEDLY ADVISED BY THE CAMBODIANS THAT HE WAS NOT NEEDED IN PHNOM PENH AT THIS TIME. SRV MILITARY HAVE INDICATED THAT WHILE CAMBODIA WAS A PROBLEM, LAOS WAS FAR MORE A CONCERN TO VIETNAM BECAUSE OF THE "VACUUM" THAT EXISTED THERE. (COMMENT: WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE VIETNAMESE MIGHT WORRY ABOUT THAI INFLUENCE IN LAOS, IT WOULD SEEM MORE LIKELY THAT THEIR CONCERN

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WOULD BE TO FORESTALL THE EXPANSION OF PRC INFLUENCE IN THE AREA.)

3. SRV-USSR RELATIONS

ACCORDING TO SOME SRV OFFICIALS, DISLIKE AND RESENTMENT OF THE SOVIETS IN VIETNAM IS GROWING IN RECENT MONTHS BECAUSE OF THE ALLEGED ARROGANCE AND HIGH-HANDED METHODS OF THE SOVIETS. THE WESTERN OFFICIAL, IN AN ASIDE, MENTIONED THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY PROHIBITED THEIR CHILDREN FROM PLAYING WITH RUSSIAN CHILDREN BECAUSE THE RUSSIAN PARENTS ARE "RACISTS" AND DO NOT ALLOW THEIR CHILDREN TO PLAY WITH THE VIETNAMESE. THE OFFICIAL ADDED THAT VIETNAMESE STUDENTS RETURNING FROM STUDYING IN THE USSR COMPLAINED TO HIM THAT THEY EXPECTED TO BE TREATED WITH SUSPICION IN VIETNAM BECAUSE THEY HAD STUDIED IN RUSSIA. BOTH THE USSR AND THE PRC ARE EXPECTED TO OPEN CONSULATES GENERAL IN SAIGON IN SEPTEMBER.

4. INTERNAL AFFAIRS

A CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM WAS REPORTED TO BE MEETING
IN HANOI IN JULY TO FORMULATE POLICY ON THE SOUTH.
THE PRIMARY CONCERN OF THIS MEETING WAS AGRICULTURAL
POLICY AND POLITBURO MEMBER VO CHI CONG IS BELIEVED
TO BE THE MAJOR FIGURE CONCERNED WITH THIS POLICY.
VIETNAMESE ATTENTION IS CURRENTLY FOCUSED ON THE
PROBLEM OF FOOD SUPPLIES BECAUSE OF THE RECENT POOR
HARVEST. A VIETNAMESE OFFICIAL SOURCE ESTIMATED THAT
THE SHORTFALL FOR RICE IN 1977 WAS 1.6 MILLION TONS
AND EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE TO MAKE UP THIS DEFICIT
FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES. ONE REPORT INDICATED THAT THE
SOVIETS WOULD PROVIDE WHEAT PURCHASED IN AUSTRALIA.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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